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The New Indian Express
Wishes its readers

Merry Christmas

CHAMPIONS TROPHY: INDIA AND PAKISTAN CLUBBED IN SAME GROUP

The ICC finally announces the schedule for the global 50-over competition that begins from February 19 in Karachi

RIVAL NEIGHBOURS PLAY IN DUBAI ON FEB 23

India are clubbed with Pakistan, New Zealand and Bangladesh in Group A. Group B comprises South Africa, Australia, Afghanistan and England. India vs Pakistan is on February 23. If India progress to semis, they will play in Dubai on March 4. If Pak advance, they play in 2nd semis in Lahore next day. If India enter final, it will be in Dubai or else in Lahore on March 9

BOXING DAY TEST: INDIA HOPE FOR MCG HEIST

- The Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch is expected to be seamer-friendly when India take on Australia in fourth Test on Thursday morning
- India are yet to decide on the final XI, but the Aussies have said they will hand 19-year-old Sam Konstas his debut. The visitors need a win to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Match live: 5 am | P15

1-1

THE FIVE-TEST SERIES IS LEVEL AT ONE A PIECE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Arif Mohd Khan | R V Arlekar | A K Bhalla | Gen V K Singh | H B Kambhampati

GUV APPOINTMENTS, SHUFFLES

Arif transferred to Bihar, Bhalla goes to Manipur

Kerala governor shifted to NDA-ruled Bihar; former home secy gets to manage Manipur

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

STRIFE-TORN Manipur on Tuesday got a seasoned hand in former Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla as its new governor. The state is yet to emerge from the ethnic conflict between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups that led to violence since May last year.

Bhalla, the longest-serving Union Home Secretary, completed his five-year tenure on August 22 this year. He is known to be a tough administrator and a strategist. Bhalla is a retired 1984-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre. If he manages to help bring some stability to Manipur, it would be a job well done. Till now, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya was holding additional charge of Manipur.

Bhalla was among the five gubernatorial appointments/transfers announced on Tuesday. The other big announcement was a swap between Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and his Bihar counterpart Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar. This newspaper had reported earlier that Arif would figure in the gubernatorial reshuffle this year.

Khan's appointment in Bihar is being seen as a strategic move ahead of assembly elections in the state in 2025 in which the BJP as a major ally of the Bihar NDA nurtures dreams of coming to power on its own. Khan is a liberal Muslim scholar who articulates the Centre's policies upfront. He was forever on a collision course with Kerala LDF government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Retired General V K Singh was appointed governor of Mizoram. The BJP had denied him a ticket for the Lok Sabha polls this year.

Gen Singh replaces Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati, who has been transferred as governor of Odisha after incumbent Raghubar Das put in his papers citing personal reasons. Gen Singh's name was doing the rounds for a gubernatorial assignment for long time and his appointment was expected to be either in J&K or Manipur but it went to Mizoram.

Sources said many more gubernatorial appointments are on the cards for states like UP, J&K, Bengal and some UTs.

CASE AGAINST MLC CT RAVI HANDED OVER TO CID: Dr G

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hubballi

KARNATAKA Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara on Tuesday said that the case filed against BJP MLC **CT Ravi** for his alleged derogatory remarks against Women and Child Development Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar has been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for investigation. Addressing reporters at the airport here, he, however, refused to comment on it. It is inappropriate to issue statements while the case is now being investigated by the CID, he said.

On Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti's statement that the Ravi-Laxmi episode is a closed chapter, the home minister said that Horatti and the police are doing their duties. Horatti might have made that statement based on certain facts.

On the delay in taking action against those who had attempted to attack Ravi on the premises of Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi, he attributed it to certain unavoidable reasons.

On allegations of interference by the Home Department in the case, he said that the department functions responsibly, adhering only to directives from the chief minister or the home minister.

On Union minister Prahlad Joshi's remark that Karnataka's home minister is incompetent, Dr Parameshwara hit back, stating that would he (Joshi) accept being labeled as an incompetent Union minister. P4

BJP X'mas outreach hits Kerala wall

K S SREEJITH @ TPuram

A day after PM Narendra Modi participated in the Christmas celebration hosted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) in Delhi, a senior Orthodox Church Bishop in Kerala on Tuesday questioned the saffron party's outreach to the Christian community.

"There (in Delhi), they honour the bishops and revere cribs. Here (in Kerala), they destroy the cribs," the metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church's Thrissur Diocese, Yuhanon Mar Meletius, said in a Facebook post.

The bishop's remarks come in the backdrop of the arrest of three VHP workers in Palakkad for trying to disrupt Christmas celebrations at a school and the destruction of a crib made by students of another school by unidentified persons. The two incidents sparked protests in Kerala, where BJP state unit started its outreach programme in which leaders would visit church heads and 10 lakh Christian homes till December 30.

According to sources, BJP central leadership asked Union Minister George Kurian and state BJP president K Surendran to openly condemn the act of the three VHP workers.

The powerful Syro Malabar Church is also not convinced by the BJP's outreach bid. "This is part of a strategy to display dominance over the minority community," said Fr Joby Kachappilly.

Political analysts view the developments as an emerging paradox within the Sangh Parivar with regard to ideology and political correctness.

"Lately, RSS chief Mohan Bhagawat has been asking various Sangh Parivar outfits to put a stop to their claims over mosques," said political analyst Ajith Sreenivasan.

In its pushback, the VHP said its workers only tried to question when small students were dressed up as Santas. "Parents of Hindu children had submitted petitions to the education department that their wards were paraded without consent," said VHP's state general secretary V R Rajasekharan.

MANUSPEAK

LAPSE YES BUT MOTIVATED

Olympics double medallist Manu Bhaker said "there has been a lapse" from her side while filing nominations for awards but says she is motivated to win medals | P15

Lokpal calls Sebi chief for oral hearing

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

TAKING cognizance of complaints of impropriety and conflict of interest filed by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and two others, anti-corruption body Lokpal on Tuesday called Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch and the complainants for 'oral hearing' on January 28.

The complaints were made on the basis of a report by US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research, according to an official order. In its report, Hindenburg alleged that Buch and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the alleged money siphoning scandal involving the Adani Group.

The Lokpal had on November 8 sought Buch's 'explanation' on the complaints filed by Moitra, a Lok Sabha member and two others.

In its order, the Lokpal asked the Registry to issue notices to the RPS (respondent public servant) as well as the complainant(s) to avail of the opportunity of oral hearing on January 28. "It will be open to the RPS (respondent public servant) as well as the complainant to authorise an advocate to espouse their cause, if they so desire at the time of oral hearing," the order said.

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ADIEU, SHYAM BABU

The mortal remains of filmmaker Shyam Benegal being taken for the last rites, at a crematorium in Mumbai on Tuesday | ANI

EXPRESS READ

Kalaburagi bandh against Shah total

KALABURAGI: The bandh call given by Dalit organisations to condemn the statement by Home Minister Amit Shah on Dr BR Ambedkar in Rajya Sabha brought Kalaburagi to a halt on Tuesday. The atmosphere in the city was tense with sporadic incidents of stone pelting reported | P6

Grilled for over 3 hours, Allu Arjun files for bail

Hyderabad: Actor Allu Arjun, Accused No. 11, in the Sandhya Theatre stampede case, was on Tuesday grilled for more than three hours by the police while a bail petition was filed on his behalf in the Nampally court. Arjun faces charges of culpable homicide in the case | P5

FROM KARNATAKA...

Lakkundi temple tableau selected for R Day parade

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Gadag

LAKKUNDI'S Brahma Jinalaya's tableau has been selected for the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on January 26. Historians, heritage enthusiasts and residents of Gadag district have thanked the artists behind the tableau, the state government and Tourism Minister HK Patil for their efforts in getting Centre's approval for this masterpiece to be showcased during the RD parade.

This recognition has come as a big boost to the district administration, which has plans for the comprehensive development of Lakkundi, and to get the UNESCO heritage site tag for this historical temple town.

Excavation work is on to unearth and restore monuments and temples in and around Lakkundi.

Sharanu Garajappanavar, a resident of Lakkundi, said, "We are happy that our temple tableau has been selected for the Republic Day parade. It will help popularise Lakkundi and its rich heritage."

Brahma Jinalaya at Lakkundi near Gadag | EXPRESS

Siddalingeshwar Patil, adviser, Lakkundi Heritage Development Authority, said, "It is a proud moment for us. We thank our artists and the tourism minister for mooting the idea of Brahma Jinalaya tableau."

11th century temple

Brahma Jinalaya is a temple near the museum at Lakkundi. This 11th century temple has a "garbhagudi", "antarala", "gudhamantapa", "agramantapa", "talavinya", and a "kapupashila" facing east.